



CIPD highlights hidden cost of poor mental health at work on National Stress Awareness Day

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Productivity across UK plc is being significantly undermined by people coming to work with poor mental health as a result of stress and conditions such as anxiety and depression, a survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reveals.

The survey of over 2,000 employees finds more than a quarter of UK workers describe their mental health as moderate or poor, with more than 90% of those suffering from poor mental health saying it affects their performance on the job.

This is worrying for employers as the majority of people with poor mental health continue to attend work. Although more than half (56%) of employees with poor mental health say they have taken time off sick as a result, almost all (98%) continue to attend work regularly.

The survey also highlights the need for employers to focus more efforts on managing this challenging issue, as only a third (37%) of workers say their organisation supports people with mental health problems well.

Findings in the CIPD Employee Outlook survey, conducted by YouGov, reveal the impact poor mental health has on employee performance:

- Nearly four out of five employees (78%) with poor mental health find it difficult to concentrate at work as a result of their illness and 57% say they take longer to do work.
- Exactly half of respondents say that they put off challenging tasks as a result of going in to work with poor mental health
- Almost half (46%) report they are less patient with customers and clients, affecting customer service
- 41% think poor mental health interferes with their ability to make decisions and 36% believe they are more likely to get into conflict with colleagues

[Ben Willmott](#), senior public policy adviser, CIPD, says: “The survey findings provide compelling evidence for why employers need to become more proactive in how they manage mental health at work. Common mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression are one of the main causes of time lost to ill health. However, in many ways it is the time people suffering from mental health problems spend at work employers should focus more efforts on managing better.

“The starting point for addressing poor mental health at work is good people management by front-line managers and supervisors. Managers can be part of the problem or part of the solution. Managers that put excessive workloads on staff or have a bullying management style are likely to either create or exacerbate mental health problems at work. In contrast, managers who communicate well and consult, coach and develop their staff are more likely to support positive mental health and resilience in the people they manage.

“Managers are also the people in organisations that should spot the early warning signs, such as changes in performance or behaviour which might indicate someone is not coping at work. Managers can ensure that people with mental health difficulties are referred to occupational health where these services are available or advise them to see their GP if they have not already done so at an early stage before their problems escalate. In some cases, managers may even be able to help people cope with their problems through informal counselling.

“The government also has role to play in ensuring that talking therapies, such as different forms of counselling, are available for people suffering from poor mental health at an early stage before their health deteriorates to the point they have to take long periods of time off work sick or fall out of employment altogether.”

Other key survey findings include:

- In all 21% of respondents say their mental health is moderate, while 6% of respondents describe their mental health as poor or very poor, compared to 72% saying their mental health is good or very good. Younger workers report the highest levels of poor mental health with 12% of 18 to 24-year-olds describing their mental as poor or very poor.
- Among people that describe their mental health as poor, 12% say this is the result of problems at work, 32% believe it is a result of problems outside work in their personal lives and 56% think it is a combination of the two.

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/pressoffice/articles/EOMentalHealthrelease.htm>